

Customs Modernization

June 2002 Status Update for Oversight Agencies

"Standardized processes are essential to the effective management of a high risk program."

*Charles R. Armstrong
Executive Director
Customs Modernization Office*

SA-CMM® Helps to Guide Customs Modernization

Developed by the Carnegie Mellon Software Engineering Institute, the Software Acquisition Capability Maturity Model (SA-CMM®) is the standard adopted by government and industry to improve their software acquisition processes. SA-CMM® describes the "buyer's" role in the software acquisition process. Customs has embraced SA-CMM®, and through the Customs Modernization Office (CMO) has developed the lion's share of the functional processes that will support software acquisition for the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE).

SA-CMM® was developed to ensure that projects such as ACE stay within budget, on schedule, and achieve performance goals. Often organizations that embark on major software acquisition do

so without the benefit of "repeatable" processes, relying mainly on the skill and experience of their employees to get the job done. As important as employee contributions are to the success of programs, defined and standardized processes must be established to guide large and complex programs like ACE and to ensure cost, schedule and performance goals are met.

Specifically, the processes under SA-CMM® will help manage software requirements; track project team and contractor performance; manage cost and schedule baselines; evaluate products and services; and successfully transition the software to its support organization.

SA-CMM® provides criteria for characterizing an organization's acquisition processes according to five levels of maturity. Each level is a layer in the foundation for continuous process improvement. Currently the CMO is striving for level 2, the level where software acquisition project management processes are documented and followed.

Standardized processes are especially important to orienting

new modernization team members to the day-to-day activities of the CMO and those of the support contractor team.

Most of the plans, processes, and procedures to achieve level 2 status have been written, and by late November the CMO is scheduled to complete process development. SA-CMM® is the foundation for developing sound and repeatable processes. The plans, processes, and procedures implemented by Customs will contribute greatly to the success of the ACE project and to Customs overall modernization program.

Trade Participation Opportunity

User involvement in the initial phase of implementing ACE is underway with the May 1, 2002 Federal Register Notice (FRN) announcement. The FRN outlines Customs plan to conduct an operational test. This test will allow selected importers and authorized parties to participate in identifying capabilities to be used in the Web-based Account Portal that will be launched in early 2003. Customs plans to accept approximately forty importer accounts for participation in this test, which is scheduled to begin in late October.

Applications are still being accepted. Future tests will expand the number of participants. Visit the Customs Modernization web site for developments and future announcements.

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